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# Haggai 2:6-7, 1927 - 1930

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HAGGAI 2, 6-7.

"For thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; And I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts."



## HAGGAI 2, 6-7.

The history of the Jewish nation, the chosen people of God, is one of the blackest records in the annals of mankind. Page after page of Old Testament history reveals their perennial ingratitude and forgetfulness of the God of their fathers. The rolling years saw them kneel before the gods of Niniveh and Egypt; the hills of Judah bore the idols of Babylon and Assyria again and again. Finally, the winds of God's anger over their sins swept them into exile and for seventy long years they sat by the waters of Babylon and wept over the lost glory of their once mighty kingdom.

But again the sun of God's mercy shone through the black clouds of despair - He heard their cries of anguish and raised up the prophet Daniel whose magnificent visions and eloquent, fearless prophecies sustained them in their night of woe. Three great kings - Nebuchadnezzar, Darius and Cyrus, heard Daniel thunder the doom of their kingdoms and announce the final glorious destiny of the people of God. Finally, in the year 536 Cyrus moved and perhaps frightened by Daniel's continual prophecies of doom issued the famous order allowing the Jews to return to their own land. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel the long and weary march back to Judah began. Arriving there, their first and divinely appointed task was to rebuild the temple of Jehovah now lying in ruins. They began - but their work did not prosper. Bands of hostile Samaritans continually interrupted the work. The builders labored with the trowel in one hand and the sword in the other. They soon became tired; their own homes were still to be



rebuilt; their vineyards lay fallow and famine threatened the land. "Build a house unto the Lord under such conditions?" Impossible, they said, and every man turned to his own interests. Suddenly a new voice was heard on the silent avenues of the city of God; it echoed out over the hills of Judah; it sounded like a trumpet call over the valleys of Israel. Again, as so often before, the Lord God Jehovah had anointed a prophet to call his wandering people back to Himself. With burning, scorching words this prophet Haggai by name, rebuked his people for their neglect of the house of God. He stormed, pleaded and wept; continually his voice rang in their ears; "Ye looked for much and lo, it came to little; and when ye brought it home, I did blow it away. Why? saith the Lord of hosts. Because of mine house that is waste, and ye run every man unto his own house. Therefore the heaven over you is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. Go up to the mountain, bring wood and build my house."

This is all we know of Haggai. Strong and unafraid his voice rises above the noise and confusion of Israel's history for a brief moment and then sinks back into eternal silence. And yet he is an important figure for us because in his fierce denunciations of his people's cowardice and laziness he pauses for a moment, gazes with divinely inspired eyes into the future and sees there another glorious temple, not built with hands, needing no stones from the brooks nor wood from the mountain; a temple of which God alone is the



builder - a temple which will stand - magnificent and beautiful - long after all the kingdoms of the earth have crashed and crumbled into destruction and ruin. This temple is the great Church of the New Testament, called into being by the coming of our blessed Savior into this world. At the hand of Haggai's words I would direct your attention to it this evening and consider:

#### THE GLORY OF THE CHURCH OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

##### AS IT IS MANIFESTED:

- I. In its preparation
- II. In the coming of its founder.
- III. In its continued existence.

##### I.

Haggai begins his prophecy: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts yet once it is a little while and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land." He introduces his words with the name of God which was always used in the Old Testament when the almighty power of the Creator and Ruler of the Universe was to be emphasized. Five times in the few brief verses surrounding our text this majestic title for God appears: "The Lord of hosts." Haggai announces to his hearers that the things he is about to prophecy can only be done by the Lord of Hosts, the God of armies, strong and mighty in battle, the God who holds the universe in the hollow of His almighty hand and guides the destinies of the nations of the earth. And this mighty ruler of heaven and earth speaks through Haggai: "Yet once, it is a little while and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land." "Yet once", he says "once more I



will do this." I have done it before; when I placed my holy law into the hands of my servant Moses the earth shook and the rocks of Sinai melted. Thunder and lightning, earthquake and storm accompanied the first dispensation when when man was given the law. But he has not kept the law, he has broken my commandments, the multitude of his sins cry to heaven - and I shall now in grace and mercy begin the preparation for the new dispensation. Once more I shall shake the heavens and the earth in preparation for another great step forward in the plan of redemption - once more shall all the forces of nature and the destinies <sup>of</sup> nations be placed clearly and visibly into the service of my eternal counsels - once more men shall see that I am a God of grace and mercy who bends all history to the purposes of His everlasting pity.

All this, says the Lord of hosts, I will do in a little while. Immediately I shall begin my preparations for the coming of the Gospel and the building of my Church. My friends, no words in the literature of prophecy have ever been fulfilled more visibly and clearly than these words of the Lord spoken through Haggai. Fifty years later Xerxes I ascended the throne of Persia and with his coming to the throne there began a period in the history of the world which stands unparalleled for war and rumors of war, for nations rising and falling, for changes in the political complexion of the earth. The earth literally shook under the tramp of armies marching to battle. The sea was dotted with the ships of warring nations. The armies of the world swept across the face of the earth in



the ecstasy of conquering and the despair of defeat. Xerxes almost conquered Greece. The tide of battle turned and Greece became mighty. She began to fall when Athens and Sparta turned on each other. The two great Macedonians, Philip and Alexander, rose into proud power and fell again into pitiable ruin. Rome reared its proud head. For a hundred years Carthage threatened her supremacy - only to crash into ruin when Hannibal was forgotten. The armies of Ptolemy and Antiochus camped on the hills of Judah. Caesar conquered Gaul and the eagles of Rome began to tread out the life-blood of the world. Fifty years before the birth of our Savior we find Rome, the most compact government the world has ever seen, supreme from Gaul to Egypt and from Spain to Judaea. The eagles of Rome ruled the world.

And what, say you, was the purpose of all this? Hear Haggai's prophecy "I will shake the nations of the earth." All the powers of the world, Xerxes, Philip, Alexander, Ptolemy, Hannibal, Julius Caesar - were being used by the Lord God Jehovah to prepare for the coming of the Prince of Peace. When Christ was born peace had come over the nations of the earth. The highways of commerce and travel were open and the triumphant march of the Church of the New Testament began. Everything had been made ready for the glorious spread of the Gospel. What more magnificent preparation for the Church of the New Testament can be imagined? The Lord had fulfilled His promise: "I will shake the heavens, and the earth and the sea, and the dry land. And I will shake the nations of the earth."



## II.

But even more glorious than the preparation for the Church of the New Testament was the coming of its founder. Officially the Church was organized in Jerusalem on Pentecost Day, but its first appearing in this world of sin and woe can be traced back to the night when its great founder lay in a manger in an obscure village in Judah. Of Him Haggai speaks when he reaches the climax of our text: "And the desire of all nations shall come." He who is the foundation and cornerstone of God's glorious temple in the New Testament; He who gives His Church those gifts which make her truly glorious, namely the forgiveness of sins and peace with God - "he", says Haggai "is the desire of all nations."

For four thousand long years the world had waited for Christ. Here and there, in the homes scattered over the hills of Judah, perhaps in some palaces of Babylon, in lonely observatories of the East, there were men who remembered the many clear and unmistakeable prophecies of the prophets who had come before Haggai. Days grew into months and months lengthened into years as they waited patiently for the star out of Jacob, the scepter out of Judah, the Virgin's Son. They knew whom they needed - and with longing eyes they looked for the coming of their desire.

But Haggai says "the desire of all nations". And his words are true. While it is evident that the world at large did not know for whom it was waiting - it is also evident that at the time of the Savior's birth it was waiting for



something, for somebody who would bring it peace - not the peace which it now outwardly enjoyed - but the peace of heart and conscience, peace with a just and angry God. Paganism had failed and was only a flickering flame fed by the hands of a few selfish priests. Judaism had degenerated into a whited sepulchre of dead formalism and rank agnosticism. The once mighty philosophies of Greece had ended in Steicism, the philosophy of hopeless despair. The world was waiting - waiting for the sun of God's mercy.

And then He came - He whom they desired - He whom they needed. Though they knew Him not; - and the glory of His coming lay not in pomp and power, not in the blare of trumpets and the strength of great armies, but in the magnificent lowliness with which He was born. Born in a stable, cradled in a manger His coming was attended by the greatest glory the world has ever seen. . . the supreme manifestation of God's love and mercy. He, the desire of all nations, by His lowly birth proclaimed to all the people of the world that He was come to be their brother, that He was the one whom they unknowingly desired and whom they needed. Never need the Church of the New Testament be ashamed of what men might call its lowly beginnings - its future glory lies revealed most clearly in the humble birth of its Lord and Savior.

But we cannot ignore the dark side of the picture. Glorious as His birth was for the believing heart - it was a glory too heavenly, too spiritual for men to see and understand. Haggai had prophesied that they desired Him, that they needed



Him - but when He came they contemptuously turned aside and said: "We see no beauty in Him that we should desire Him." And so they hunted Him, persecuted Him, cursed Him, reviled Him - and finally killed Him who had come to give them the forgiveness of sins and erect among them an eternal kingdom of grace and mercy. We stand in wonder and amazement and ask: How is this? How can men ignore the clear voice of prophecy? How can they ignore the testimony of the manger, the cross and the open tomb? How can they stand blind and unseeing before the greatest revelation of the mercy of God? My friends, the answer lies deep in the heart of man. From the gates of Paradise Lost the heart of natural man has been enmity against God - and so it will remain unto the end of time.

And therefore we find that the history of the Church of the New Testament is merely a repetition of the history of our blessed Savior. Standing in this hostile world she is and will ever remain a suffering Church - a Church never at rest, never at peace; a church never without war and never without wounds. Even now the scars of battle are upon her; she needs again and again the divine assurances of her glory. And she finds these assurances in full measure in the pages of Holy Writ. In no sections of the sacred record does the Holy Spirit so vividly employ the whole force and splendor of inspiration as in those in which He describes the continued existence of the Church of God here on earth. Outstanding among these is the final clause of our text for this evening: "And I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of



hosts."

### III.

The Lord Himself will fill His house - the Church - with glory. Wherein does this glory consist? It is strange that after 1900 years of Christianity men should still have so many false impressions concerning the glory of the Church. It lies not in pomp and power, in great numbers, in stately buildings and tremendous worldly influence. No, her glory goes much deeper than that - hers is a spiritual glory and consists first of all in the treasures which have been entrusted to her by her divine founder - within her walls are proclaimed the forgiveness of sins and peace with God, the full treasures of divine grace and mercy. No man can take these away from her, they are hers by divine right, and in their possession lies her glory. It is significant that the only direct reference in the New Testament to Haggai's prophecy of the glory of the Church emphasizes the fact that she is the dwelling-place of God's grace and mercy. Let her therefore be derided and mocked, jeered and scorned - her abiding glory remains with her - she holds in her hands the forgiveness of sins and peace with God.

"I will fill this house with glory", saith the Lord of hosts. This glory of the Church as she exists today lies secondly in her enduring strength. What, say you, the Church is strong? Where are the evidences of her strength? The storms of atheism and unbelief are beating against her walls; the insidious tides of modernism are seeking to draw away her very foundations; foes beset her from without and within. She is weary with continual strife and



warfare - where lies her strength? Ah, my friend, her strength lies in her firm, immovable adherence to her great Lord and Savior. Clinging to Him who came to the manger at Bethlehem 1900 years ago and now sits enthroned at the right hand of the Father she has weathered all the storms of 19 centuries and will remain victorious over all her foes until the end of time. You and I may not see it, but steadily and surely all the history of the world, which is only the scaffolding of the temple which God is building, is slowly but surely being broken off in preparation for the final revelation of the Church of God. Once more the Lord God shall shake the nations of the earth; and on that glorious day He shall transform and translate the Church militant into the Church triumphant and silently and majestically all the strong timbers and the great stones which have been prepared here in time shall fit themselves into the finished temple and there shall be revealed the Kingdom of glory, the everlasting Kingdom of our God and Lord, our Savior Jesus Christ.

My friend prepare in this advent season to meet Him as He comes in blessing. If you do not meet Him now you will not be with Him when He comes to take His Church home!